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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MEPN](#) [UNSC](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [FR](#) [SP](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPT HOSTS SENIOR FRENCH, SPANISH, AND ITALIAN
DIPLOMATS FOR CONSULTATIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Italian and French Embassy officials offered separate readouts on October 16 of a gathering in Cairo of senior diplomats from Rome, Paris, and Madrid the day before to discuss the Middle East peace process and related topics. Italian Embassy First Secretary Lamberto Moruzzi and French Embassy First Secretary Etienne Chapon told poloff the idea for the meeting of the Deputy Directors General for Middle East Affairs with their Egyptian counterparts resulted from a meeting between Spanish FM Moratinos and Egyptian FM Aboul Gheit on the margins of the UN General Assembly. According to the French and Italian diplomats, the Spanish pressed for agreement on a joint statement on the peace process for an October 27 Euro-Med Forum meeting in Alicante, Spain, but were rebuffed.

¶2. (C) Our Italian and French colleagues were unsure why Spain, France, and Italy were invited while other Europeans (i.e., Greece, which complained) were excluded. Noting that the three Europeans were principle contributors to an expanded UNIFIL in Lebanon, and all were keen for progress on the peace process, Chapon speculated that Madrid hoped to position itself as host for any international conference on the Israel-Palestinian issue. Moruzzi volunteered that they did not agree to form a new group, and would brief Israel and other European states "to ensure maximum transparency." While the Egyptians and Europeans recognized the importance of Washington's role in reaching final resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, he said, they agreed that momentum in the peace process must be created as Washington is "distracted and unable to take decisive steps."

¶3. (C) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Chief of Cabinet Wafaa Bassim, the Assistant Minister for European Affairs Fatma al Zahran, and Cabinet Advisor Ezzedine Shukry hosted the group. Minister Aboul Gheit also met the group for roughly 30 minutes. In addition to their MFA colleagues, the French and Italians met separately with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa. While Lebanon was discussed both at the MFA and the Arab League, little substantive discussion ensued. The French diplomat noted disagreement between his government and that of Spain and Italy over engagement with Syrian President Asad. Madrid and Rome support talks with Asad (as evidenced by the recent Moratinos visit to Damascus) while Paris sees no value in engagement at this time. Chapon said the issue of threats to the government of Lebanese PM Seniora by Syria and its proxies in Lebanon was not raised.

JONES